



Title	Asia's Educational Edge: Current Achievements in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, and India
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educational progress in an admirably reader-friendly format. The book presents a strong study of the hidden effects of educational reforms related to examination outcomes and makes a significant contribution to the field. The detail and rigor with which the survey data are presented, and the implications drawn from them, lend themselves to both subject material and teaching content across all discipline areas that adopt a critical gaze at the legitimizing systems of social institutions, educational progression, and reform.

While the data are located mainly in the Australian state of Victoria, the considerable detail here provides a beneficial foundation upon which to expand data comparisons. It invites the opportunity for further research of comparative nature from other Australian states as well as other international settings. The book provides a significant contribution to the international readership in comparative education disciplines due to its effective integration of educational reform, historical fact, survey data, and national policy research, all the while generative of their sobering human social consequences.

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Asia's Educational Edge: Current Achievements in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, and India
by Yugui Guo. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005. \$95.00 290 pp. (cloth).
ISBN 0-7391-0737-2.

The era of globalization is characterized by the international flow of capital, technology, and knowledge. As the world's strongest economy, with the largest per capita income and research system, the United States has asserted global leadership and has greatly benefited from globalization. The United States attracts many talented international students and professional immigrants, especially from Asia. The foreign-born talent has helped to advance knowledge and propel the United States to a position of global leadership in science and technology.

However, according to Yugui Guo, the landscape is changing. Increasing numbers of Asian students return home after finishing their programs in the United States, and China and India, in particular, are building their economies and taking measures to retain their own talent. The U.S. government is aware that it cannot rely on imported talent and faces a structural imbalance between its huge need and inadequate supply of personnel in the high-tech economy. Such factors underpin the need for review of patterns and trends.

In an interrelated and interdependent world, in order to better understand one's own education system, it is useful to examine the education systems of other places. In this book, the education systems of five Asian economies have been selected not only because they are the top five sources of international students but also because their immigrants are believed to be "model minorities" (6), with high levels of education and earnings in the United States. To reexamine education in the United States and to produce policy implications, this book analyzes edu-

cation in Japan, [South] Korea, Taiwan, China, and India and compares patterns with those in United States. The book is the product of a research project called Building Engineering and Science Talent (BEST). Its findings have been used to illuminate the BEST report submitted to the U.S. Congress.

The book has five parts and begins with the structural imbalance between the need for and supply of talent in the United States. This first part explains the reasons for selecting these five economies on the other side of the earth, rather than closer countries such as Mexico and Brazil.

Part two summarizes major challenges facing U.S. education and establishes a basis for the comparative studies. The author indicates that although there is great strength at the highest education levels, particularly at the level of doctoral education, the average quality of education of U.S. students at the K-12 and undergraduate levels lags behind that of the Asian societies.

Part three, the core of the book, presents a profile of education in each of the five Asian economies. Each system has its problems, such as "education hell" in Japan, "education fever" and "spoon-fed" teaching in Korea, fierce examination and pervasive supplementary tutoring in Taiwan, high dropout rates in compulsory education and examination orientation in China, and overeducation at the tertiary level and gender disparity at all levels in India. However, the book primarily presents positive dimensions from which, it suggests, the United States can learn.

Educational achievements in Japan are particularly striking, and the large pool of educated and skilled human resources has promoted prosperity. Similarly, in Korea the human resources together with the strong commitment of parents has facilitated the nation's economic takeoff. Regarding the quality of education in Japan and Korea, the author notes students' impressive performance in mathematics and science compared with that of their U.S. peers. Largely due to related cultures and traditions, education in Taiwan shares many common traits with that in Korea. While Japan took steps to become a receiving nation by providing financial support to attract international students, both Korea and Taiwan have attracted overseas students back home and have turned "brain drain" into "brain gain."

China and India also have attained remarkable education achievements during the past half-century. These two "huge periphery" nations (the term comes from Altbach, Philip G., *Comparative Higher Education: Knowledge, the University, and Development* [Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, 1998], 189) have been among the largest places of origin for international students. Expansion has given China rather than the United States the largest higher education system in the world, and India has found multiple ways to attract its expatriates to serve the homeland. With rapid economic growth and increasing economic strength, both China and India certainly will become destinations for international talent. Besides, China shows strong performance in mathematics and science in primary and secondary education, and India surprises its counterparts with its strength in mathematics and information technology.

Part four, the conclusion, presents both quantitative and qualitative comparisons, summarizes common features in the five Asian societies, and highlights implications for the United States. Although some features might not have relevance to the United States because of that country's unique characteristics and rooted

traditions, some remarks are insightful. For example, if the national academic standards are set by the federal government, professional organizations need to be established to evaluate and control the quality of education; foreign languages should be adopted as a required course in U.S. compulsory education; the United States should send more students abroad for study; and the United States should build up a society devoted to learning.

Based on systematic description and comparison, the book presents various challenges facing education in the United States. With substantive data, the volume provides valuable materials for further comparative studies. The book also shows some depth despite its breadth. For example, since it is difficult for some popular theories such as human capital theory and modernization theory to offer a fully satisfactory explanation of the early stages of Korea's educational development, the author probes the distinguishing factors in Korean society and culture (86–87).

The book basically presents positive dimensions of education in the five Asian societies, and the negative aspects are arguably understated. Also, various core questions remain unanswered. For example, how can one explain the contrast between the “great strength” (33) of U.S. highest education and “lagging behind” (33–34) of K–12 and undergraduate education compared with that of the Asian societies? Also, to what extent are the mathematics and science scores of the Asian students the result of intensive out-of-school tutoring, and what impact has this had on young people's lives?

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EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006: Literacy for Life by EFA Global Monitoring Report team at UNESCO. Paris: UNESCO, 2006. 447 pp. ISBN 92-3-104008-1.

This year's *EFA* [Education For All] *Global Monitoring Report* (GMR) is the fourth volume produced by an independent editorial team housed at UNESCO (available on the EFA Web site at <http://www.efareport.unesco.org> or by contacting efa.report@unesco.org). It is the product of a collaborative effort involving members of the GMR team and many other people, agencies, institutions, and governments. The GMR was created to monitor the progress of national and international commitment to achieving the six goals set at the World Education Forum in Dakar in the year 2000. Each volume to date is divided into a narrative section examining overall progress and an in-depth substantive review of the issues and research-based evidence concerning a specific goal. The second half is composed of a statistical annex that includes an elaboration of the EFA Development Index and statistical tables on education data and information on aid flows.

The 2006 volume on literacy provides a timely, authoritative, and comprehen-